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TECHNICAL REPORT

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MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY IN ISRAEL

BY JOHN E. RASMUSSEN

7 August 1967

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NOTE:

This report is based on a visit made approximately one month before the recent Israeli-Arab conflict. It has not been modified to reflect developments subsequent to last April.

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MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY IN ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

A visit to Israel is a truly unique experience for a psychologist concerned with research and applied work in a military context. Although the history of the Israeli military psychology program is relatively short, approximately 19 years, this entire period has been marked either by overt conflict or a constant state of military alertness. It is doubtful whether there is any other country in the world where a military psychology program has been developed and has functioned for so long in an environment of constant alertness and actual skirmish.

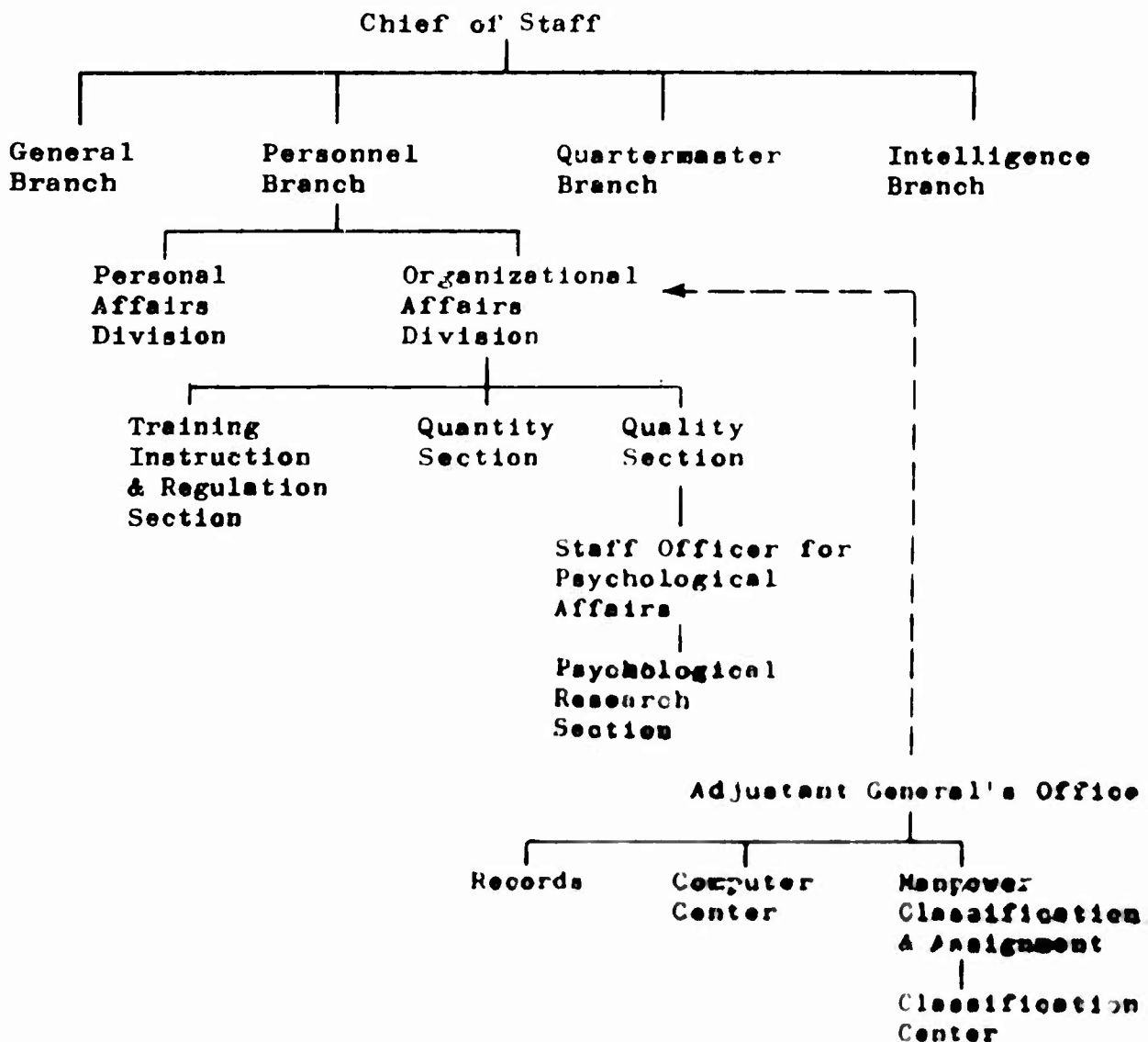
For the Israeli psychologist, the military may provide an interesting professional challenge because of the excellent opportunities which exist to develop, test, and apply psychological theory; however, one also receives the impression that there may be a degree of emotional dedication to the task which is seldom encountered elsewhere. Psychology appears to be well accepted by the Israeli Defence Forces, and because of the small size of the country and its armed forces, feedback to the psychologists engaged in research efforts is excellent.

The information contained in this report was obtained during a three-day visit in April to the Israeli military psychology group. The visit was made on an unclassified basis, and the fact that an unclassified technical report would be written was clearly established at the outset. This frame of reference, obviously, put certain constraints on topics discussed and the degree to which detailed information may be reported here. As might be expected, the present political-military situation in Israel has brought about a profound degree of security consciousness. While there has been some relaxation of classification on military psychology research and applied efforts, this is by no means complete. Thus certain aspects of the current Israeli military psychology effort are not covered here. Security classification policies prevent disclosure of information on topics such as sample size, acceptance and rejection rates, attrition, etc. Generally speaking, the program as a whole probably operates under greater security constraints than any comparable military program encountered during a three-year tour of duty as a liaison scientist for psychology in ONR London. While these restrictions at times became a handicap in discussing statistical aspects of research, this did not significantly detract from the value of the visit. It is difficult to imagine a

more positive and genuinely warm reception than that given by the Israeli Defence psychologists, and the fact that certain areas or details could not be shared was mutually accepted without embarrassment or concern.

Place of Psychology in Israeli Defence Forces Structure:

In order to appreciate the role of military psychology in the Israeli Defence Forces, it is necessary to sketch briefly the organization of the Forces and to outline where and how psychology fits in. No attempt will be made to outline the total defence structure; therefore the following organization chart is incomplete as it deals only with those offices and groups which are of concern in military psychology.



The Personnel Branch, designated as A Branch, is of primary interest in the psychology program. The Training Instruction and Regulations Section of the Organizational Affairs Division is responsible for developing training programs as well as determining guidelines and policy for their management. Training per se is a function of the General Branch. The Quantity Section is concerned with manpower planning, quantitative projections as to availability of men and military requirements, and determining the size of the preliminary training programs. The Quality Section is responsible for establishing induction standards and determining the quality of the input necessary to meet personnel requirements for all three Services. The Psychology Research Section, headed by Lt. Colonel Mordecai Eran, is part of the Quality Section.

As indicated on the above chart, the Adjutant General's Office of the Defence Forces also is responsible to the Chief of the Organizational Affairs Division. The Adjutant General's Office has three major responsibilities or functions: Record Maintenance, Management of the Computer Center, and Enlisted Manpower Classification and Assignment. There is a section in the Manpower Classification Branch that is responsible for the development and maintenance of the psychometric batteries used in classification.

The Israeli Defence Force is a tri-service structure with the Army, Navy, and Air Force chiefs reporting directly to the Chief of Staff. There are various corps, Supply, Medical, Engineering, etc., the most important of which is the Education Corps. The head of the Education program is considered to hold a position both of prestige and responsibility. His group has a twofold function. First, it is responsible for the indoctrination of all Israeli military personnel on general political-military matters. A very unique and important aspect of this function is the development of a sense of Israeli national character among the Service personnel who come to the Forces with extremely heterogeneous cultural and language backgrounds. The Education Corps is also responsible for a more classic type of academic program. In Israel the military service is used as an opportunity to correct educational deficiencies among the younger people of the country. Formal academic courses are operated which ensure that all members of the military service will have completed at least eight years of schooling before returning to civilian life. Beyond that, a four-months post-service technical program is operated at the secondary level for individuals completing their military obligations. Courses are designed to aid the Corps in assisting individuals without a specific trade to obtain gainful

employment upon return to civilian life.

HISTORY OF MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

Military psychology in Israel began in 1948 with the formation of the Israeli Defence Forces. The major effort at that time was on pilot selection for the Air Force and on the selection and classification of enlisted personnel for Army service. The Air Force pilot selection program began under the direction of Professor Ronald Shouval, now at Tel-Aviv University, who until a year ago was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army and headed the military psychology program. In 1950 the Air Force and Army effort were united and a Psychotechnical Center was formed. The British War Office Selection Board assessment procedure was introduced along with several batteries of psychological tests. During this era most of the instruments and techniques used in the Israeli military forces had been developed in the US and Great Britain. The tests were translated into Hebrew and adopted without further modification.

With the formation of the Psychotechnical Center a research section was developed under Dr. M. Reeb and tests were standardized on Israeli populations. At the same time, because so many members of the service did not know Hebrew, a series of nonverbal tests were developed to overcome the rather pronounced language problem.

In 1953 the Manpower Classification and Assignment Center of the Adjutant General's office was opened and the psychology group transferred to that activity. At the same time the responsibility for psychological research was assigned to the Chief Psychologist in the Israeli Defence Forces Headquarters. This led to an extension of the research program into the broad areas of social and personnel psychology. Routine work on the maintenance of basic selection and classification batteries, however, has remained with the Selection Center.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Chief Psychologist of the Israeli Defence Forces is a regular Army officer, Lt.-Colonel Mordecai Eran. Eran took his bachelor's degree in psychology just before the Israeli War of Independence. During the war he served as an infantry officer and was seriously wounded. He remained in the Army, however, and his entire postwar career has been in military psychology. He holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and considers himself an industrial psychologist by training and interest.

Eran's primary office, as Chief Psychologist, is in the Israeli Defence Forces Headquarters. Here he has the administrative responsibility for the assignment and professional functioning of all psychologists in the military service. In addition he has the technical responsibility for all psychological research conducted in the Armed Forces. The psychologists working in operational or applied settings are professionally responsible to the command which they serve.

Both uniformed and civilian psychologists are used in the Israeli Defence Forces. All of the senior psychologists are PhD's, with the overwhelming majority being graduates of American universities. The junior psychologists, who generally have lesser academic training, for the most part are reserve officers fulfilling their military obligations. It is interesting to note that because of the Israeli conscript and reserve military service regulations, all of the psychologists, both civilian and military, have served in uniform. Moreover, inasmuch as all Israeli officers are selected from the ranks, the psychologists also have had experience both as enlisted men and as officers. A number have had active combat service. There is a shortage of psychologists in Israel, and this is felt in the armed services as elsewhere. On the other hand, the military psychology program does have the advantage of being able to utilize the services of individuals who are fulfilling their military obligations.

Relationships with Israeli universities are excellent. In fact, all of the senior military psychologists, including Eran, hold part-time university appointments. The quality of the senior people in the program is uniformly high, and they all have established reputations in civilian professional circles on the basis of their professional accomplishments. This, plus the general Israeli interest in defence matters, results in military psychology being far better accepted than in most countries. One of the greatest obstacles which the group has had to face, but one which is diminishing somewhat now, is the restriction of publication in the open literature. Until recently, only work carried out in university laboratories could be published. However, it now is possible to publish theoretical work from the military research program, providing the papers give no information on the Israeli Defence Forces per se.

The most interesting aspect of military psychology in Israel is the research effort. Accordingly, this will be treated in the next section of the report with the operational program being summarized at the conclusion.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION OF A BRANCH

The Psychological Research Section of A Branch is physically located at the Defence Forces Classification Center on the outskirts of Tel-Aviv. The Section is housed in a barracks-type building which is rather spartan and barren in appearance, although it differs little from other buildings at this base. Each psychologist has his own office. There is a small, although well-stocked, professional library and conference room, and a somewhat limited IBM data processing and storage facility.

At present Eran continues to act as head of the Section, a position which he held prior to his being appointed as Chief Psychologist of the Defence Force. Reportedly, the post has been vacant for over a year -- in fact, since Shouval left the service -- as none of the senior psychologists has any desire to take on administrative responsibilities. Even though the contrast in environment and situation is extreme, the story of finding a head for this branch is quite analogous to the problem encountered in replacing departmental chairmen at American universities. There are no formal divisions or groupings in the research organization. Each senior research officer works in his own particular field of endeavor and has one or more junior psychologist to assist him, along with the necessary supporting clerical and technical personnel.

The problems tackled by the research section originate both from within and outside the organization. The primary direction comes from requests which originate in various offices of the Israeli Defence Forces; however, an increasing share of the work is being generated by psychologists who serve as consultants to field organizations. An annual meeting is held where key personnel in the Israeli Forces are brought together to review and comment on the current direction of the research effort.

A committee, composed of the psychologists in the Research Section, as well as selected personnel from the Education Section and other branches of the Service, considers all research proposals and reports. The proposals and drafts of reports prepared by all investigators, regardless of seniority, must be approved by this committee. Reportedly the meetings are marked by total candor and critical specificity reminiscent of a graduate seminar. The frank goal of the committee is to "wash dirty linen" internally so that work emanating from the Research Section will be as professionally sound and meaningful as possible. To the outside observer it would appear as though this worked reasonably well; it will be evident in the comments that follow that all work of the Research

Section is good, even though some aspects may be "better" than others.

Eran, even though he now serves as Chief Psychologist, manages to spend a great deal of his time in the Research Section. In addition to serving as temporary head of the Section, he is teaching and supervising graduate students at Bar-Ilan University, and he is also active as an investigator. Eran and his assistants provide a certain "fire department" type of support in conducting polls on problems of particular interest to the military service. Moreover, he is active in the program on pre-military training of personnel who have not reached the age of conscription. Eran also is working on a personality inventory which he hopes will replace the present time-consuming and expensive interview.

Dr. J. Rosenberg was born in the US and received his PhD from Columbia University in social psychology. His primary interest is in the area of delinquency and psychological problems of training. Rosenberg's present research is concerned with the training of tank crewmen and is patterned quite specifically after HuMMRo investigations in this area. The work began at the request of the Army, since apparently there was dissatisfaction with the training course as it existed, both because of an imbalance of the proportion of men qualified to perform various tank crew functions, and because the course was too long. Rosenberg approached his problem by sitting through the course for tank crewmen and making an analysis in terms of (1) rote learning versus meaningfulness of material, and (2) functional context training -- massed versus spaced learning.

He found that the material taught was not being truly related to the subject matter. In fact, it appeared that the actual learning process was being subordinated to administrative problems of classroom assignment, scheduling, etc. Rosenberg and his assistants reorganized the material into related blocks and eliminated rote memorization of unessential information regarding equipment. In essence, the focus was placed on meaningfulness of material and systematic introduction of information in a functional context. It is reported that this effort has been so well received that there has been somewhat of a boomerang effect: the training officers are so pleased with the revised curriculum that they see no need to carry out the systematic follow-up studies which Rosenberg would like to conduct. He is now involved in a restructuring of the maintenance training program. The procedures being followed are essentially those used in the work described above.

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There is nothing particularly original or new in the training research which Rosenberg and his colleagues have been carrying out. They are, however, both well aware of this fact and quite obviously capable of more sophisticated effort. The decision to work on the practical and empirical level deliberately has been made to capitalize on the limited professional resources available within the psychology program. In discussing his program, Rosenberg tends to display ambivalence rather than dissatisfaction. He obviously has a strong professional need to delve deeper into the problems with which he is faced. Nevertheless, he clearly realizes that his more superficial approach is in fact producing positive results for the services.

One of the strongest and most creative of the Israeli military psychology group is Dr. M. Reeb, a South African who holds a PhD from London University. For a number of years Reeb has been working in two major areas, manpower quality planning and optimization of classification procedures. Work in the first area was initiated some time ago to develop a routine procedure for determining how adequately the quality requirements for military manpower input could be met in future years. The goal for this effort was to construct a series of manpower-quality indices which would relate both the military requirements and the degree to which these requirements would be met by the service-age Israeli population at any given time in the foreseeable future.

As a first step, Reeb performed a job analysis on 115 military billets to establish minimum acceptable language, education, and general intelligence levels. Cutting scores were determined empirically by ascertaining the minimum scores of men satisfactorily performing during a period of extreme manpower shortage. Next, he took additional samples of men and attempted to develop a criterion measure, which permits men to be rated on a scale from zero to five, in terms of "value" or performance effectiveness to the Army. A further series of studies was conducted in which the criterion measures were obtained on samples of men, in the 115 types of billets in question, who possessed varying quality-index scores. It was found that the intelligence and a general interview rating were better predictors of the criterion than the score on education. Replication of these studies has demonstrated that the quality indices of manpower consistently correlate with the criterion measures in the vicinity of 0.55 - 0.59. Work on this problem came to a natural conclusion several years back when the quality of Israeli manpower increased to a point that there usually is overqualification in the more routine billets. In addition, a large number of programs are easily filled with volunteers who exceed minimum scores, and many technical billets

are occupied by individuals who have learned the appropriate trade or skill prior to entering the military. The quality index classification system still is used in assigning men who do not volunteer for special programs or who do not have a trade. Thus, the system now is essentially a classification procedure although it was never intended for that purpose.

Reeb's current interest is in the optimization of classification procedures. Essentially, this is a sophisticated expansion of the first problem area. Reeb began a differential classification program very much along the lines used by the U.S. Army Personnel Research Office. Substantial quantities of information on individual soldiers is collected and a computer utilized to predict towards a criterion.

Another phase of the work is concerned with long-term prediction of potential in personnel allocation. Here, an effort is being made to develop objective methods of personnel allocation which consider factors such as individual promotion potential as well as over-qualification for both present and anticipated future billets in a particular military specialty. A third tangent of this research effort is the attempt to develop techniques for integrating what Reeb refers to as "the old sergeant intuition" with more objective indices in personnel placement.

Finally, an attempt is being made to develop questionnaires which will replace the individual interviews now used. The interview has proved a fairly powerful although time-consuming tool in the military psychology program. While this work is still in a relatively early stage, none of the questionnaire forms developed to date have shown the predictive validity of the interview. At the same time, intercorrelation with the interview is sufficiently low that it is quite possible the two procedures are not sampling the same information.

Dr. Y. Amir, a social psychologist trained at New York University, is concerned primarily with officer selection. His past work in this area includes studies of inter-rater reliability in selection programs, development of criterion measures against which to predict in selection programs, studies of social relationships between officers, and attitude and public opinion surveys on military officer careers. At present Amir is concerned with the low retention rate for Army officers. Problems have been experienced for some time in retaining officers beyond their compulsory two and a half years of service. The study, now in its fourth year, has provided some preliminary data. Samples of officers are interviewed every second year while in service and within six months after they leave. Two

broad groups of men who are extremely difficult to retain in service have been identified: officers who enter the service from a kibbutz, and intellectually promising individuals who wish to obtain a university education. It appears that a number of recommendations will be made on the basis of this program, including the development of a modified college program for career officers and attempts to modify attitudes in the kibbutz towards career military service.

Amir is also working with a sociometric approach to selecting non-commissioned officers. Except for one feature, this work does not differ significantly from the body of studies of this nature which have been conducted in the U.S. military services. The sociometric instrument has been developed with "filler" items which sample morale. The morale items, in and of themselves, have some predictive validity. However, they are primarily used to provide feedback to military commanders regarding the current morale of their troops.

APPLIED MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

The research program, which is partially described above, constitutes only one aspect of military psychology in Israel. By far the largest part of the effort is concerned with applied or operational psychology programs.

Military service is compulsory in Israel for both males and females, although there are many ways in which women can and do avoid service. Men serve for 2½ years from the age of 18 and women have 20 months of obligated service from 18. While there is an academic reserve program for men which combines university and army training, there are few ways in which a physically and mentally able man can avoid service at some point in his life. Women tend to be more highly selected for service than men and may obtain deferments on the basis of marriage or being a conscientious objector. Men serve in the reserve until they are 49 years of age and women until they are 30. One month of active duty per year is required of reserves.

At the age of 17 every Israeli young man and woman is required to register for military service at one of six Defence Force Centers throughout the country. A psychometric test battery is administered at the time of registration. At the age of 17½, a second visit is made to the registration center, where the potential conscripts are given a medical examination and interviewed. The interview is conducted by a line officer, not a psychologist, who has had several months of training in interview technique at Tel-Aviv University. There is no psychiatric examination during the screening process. At the

age of 18, men found acceptable for service are sent to the Induction and Classification Center at Haifa. In addition to a full basic test battery administered at this Center, the conscript undergoes classification testing. An "on the job" work sample is utilized to examine men who profess skill and specialized training in trades such as carpentry, electricity, etc.

Army Program: A group of psychologists working under Lt.-Colonel M. Bloom, a regular Army officer trained in psychology, is responsible for the maintenance of the basic selection battery for all Israeli enlisted personnel, Army officer selection, and psychological consultation service in the Army. The psychology test batteries for enlisted personnel do not differ markedly from those found elsewhere in the world and will not be described here.

The officer selection program is based on the old British War Office Selection Board (WOSB) procedure. Teams of observers, consisting of one psychologist and one Army combatant officer, rate officer candidates in the various WOSB field problems. It would appear that the problems thus have been modified very little from those used by the British during World War II. In addition, all officer candidates are evaluated in terms of intelligence, education, and psychosocial background. A highly important contribution to officer candidate selection is the fact that all of the candidates have served at least one year on active duty as enlisted men.

Bloom systematically collects data on the effectiveness of his rating teams in the WOSB type procedure. Approximately one-third of applicants for officer training survive the psychological selection procedure. Approximately 12% of men given the highest rating fail in training. It has been difficult to carry out the type of follow-up studies which might be desired on the effectiveness of the selection procedures. However, there are several procedures in the training program which indicate that the officer selection procedures do have validity, even though they do not possess the predictive powers which might be desired.

One of the most unique and intriguing programs of the Army group is that involving the assignment of psychologists to units or organizations in the field as consultants to the commanding officer. This program, which started approximately a year ago, combines the collection of research data and a more applied consultation function. The unit consultants screen all personnel who are newly assigned to their field unit, review

basic test battery scores, and advise on the optimal classification and assignment of the individual within the unit. They assist in the selection of noncommissioned officers, using sociometric techniques. In a study recently completed it was found that the field psychologist's recommendation is significantly more accurate than that of line officers and noncommissioned officers in the preliminary recommendation of individuals for officer candidate training. The field psychologists also conduct "discussion" groups concerned with supervisor-subordinate relationships and problems encountered by personnel in adjusting to the military service. Actually these discussions are conducted along the lines of group therapy sessions, although this clinical orientation is not made known to the participants.

It is intended that the field psychologists will be called upon to assist in developing a long-term sequential-classification procedure for the Army. In this connection they will be able to carry out formal psychometric testing of personnel in the field and collect criterion data.

The assignment of psychologists to positions in Army units is recognized as providing a built-in capability for follow-up studies. The primary problem encountered with this program to date is one of over-enthusiastic acceptance by the line commanders. Bloom and Eran are acutely aware of the dangers inherent in the possibility of line commanders developing unrealistic expectations and subsequently finding that the psychologists are not able to meet the demands made upon them.

Navy: Lieutenant B. Shalit is a career uniformed psychologist assigned to the Navy. Shalit is working on a PhD at the University in Jerusalem, although the overwhelming bulk of his professional work is of an applied nature. He is responsible for the selection of submarine, commando, and naval officer school personnel. Shalit, who himself has many of the physical and behavioral characteristics of a commando, reportedly is extremely well accepted by the Israeli Navy and his advice highly regarded. The selection procedures utilized in his group are highly clinical in orientation, and it would appear as if little systematic effort has been made to validate the contribution that any test procedure makes to the total battery or for that matter the battery itself. It is interesting to note that in the selection of commandos, Shalit employs a one-hour "Lilly" type of immersion along with a two-day group isolation situation.

While up to 60% of applicants for the Navy programs are rejected by Shalit, the men he accepts apparently perform well as there is little attrition during or after training. One receives the impression that Shalit is a most capable clinician

with an unusually comprehensive understanding of the psychological demands of the many programs with which he is concerned. Obviously, the techniques he employs work for him. At the same time, one wonders whether the results obtained in this program are so dependent upon Shalit as an individual that the program would collapse if he were to leave.

Air Force: Air Force pilots are selected by a medical board which employs psychiatrists and junior psychologists who administer tests and function generally to support the psychiatrists in their work.

A pilot test-battery and psychomotor tests were developed in the early 1950's. These are revised and updated from time to time. Work apparently is under way on the development of new eye - hand coordination tests. A civilian sociologist serves as a part-time consultant to the Air Force, doing work in the broad field of small group psychology. Work also is under way on the development of sequential selection procedures much along the lines used at the Naval School of Aviation Medicine at Pensacola. This entails the development of a multiple scoring system where data is added to a composite throughout training with a view towards providing information on the cadet's probability of success at various stages throughout training. Reportedly, this work has reached a stage where it has some practical value, although it is considered that the program will be considerably refined in the next few years.

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